

## Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers January 4, 2006

### Latest Traffic Safety News

#### **New Mexico Launches Hot Line To Curb Impaired Driving**

The state of New Mexico recently unveiled "DrunkBusters," a new hotline that allows citizens to immediately report suspected impaired drivers to law enforcement. Calls are answered by the Department of Public Safety, who will try to obtain as much information as possible and dispatch the nearest law enforcement official. The new hotline comes as part the state's plan to raise public and media awareness about alcohol impaired driving. Read the press release at <http://www.nmshtd.state.nm.us/upload/contents/436/122205-DrunkBusters%20News%20Release.pdf>

#### **Speed Enforcement Cameras To Be Installed Along Arizona Highway**

A highway in Scottsdale, Arizona will become among the first to have photo enforcement cameras installed to monitor speed. The installation officially begins the city's nine-month test of the cameras, which is scheduled to begin early next year. Scottsdale's program is thought to be the first of its kind in the United States, in which speeders on a freeway will be ticketed using fixed cameras. Read the full article at <http://www.eastvalleytribune.com/index.php?sty=55664>

#### **Study: Truck Driver Crash Risk Highest During Last Hour Of Driving**

The crash risk for truck drivers in the last hour of the legally allowable 11-hour day behind the wheel is more than three times higher than during the first hour, a Pennsylvania State University research team has concluded. For 60 years, federal rules limited truckers to driving 10 consecutive hours. However, in January 2004, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) raised the limit to 11 hours of driving time and reaffirmed the change in October 2005.

#### **New Toll Strategies Attempt to Reduce Congestion, Commutes**

As traffic and commute times continue to escalate across the country, a growing number of states are creating incentives for drivers to switch to electronic toll paying. Meanwhile, toll agencies are offering discounts to drivers who pay tolls via an electronic windshield-mounted device. Agencies also are working to develop a system in which drivers electronically pay tolls at highway speeds instead of stopping or slowing down. In yet another strategy, some states are considering making carpool lanes available to solo drivers who are willing to pay extra for the privilege. Read the full article at <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/05347/621634.stm>

#### **Safety Groups Continue To Lobby For Vehicle Fire Awareness**

Some safety experts are increasingly voicing their concerns about the many vehicle fires that go unreported to government agencies. According to AAA, there were more than 266,500 vehicle fires, resulting in 1,300 injuries and nearly \$1 billion in property damage. An estimated 500 to 1,000 fatal accidents involving fires never get reported as fire-related deaths, reported the Motor Vehicle Fire Research Institute. Safety experts are calling for improved reporting methods and vehicle early warning systems. For more information visit <http://www.aaafoundation.org/multimedia/index.cfm?button=%20article&?SMContentIndex=2&SMContentSet=0>

### **Study Reveals The Dangers Of Driver Distraction**

Distracted driving is the number one cause of traffic crashes, according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. A Virginia Tech Transportation Institute study revealed just how dangerous distracted drivers can be. After following 241 drivers who clocked 2 million miles on the road, researchers concluded that the main cause of crashes was that the drivers simply were not paying attention due to distractions such as cell phones, changing the music on a CD player, or just being tired. Nearly 80 percent of the crashes and 65 percent of the near-crashes happened because drivers weren't paying attention.

### **Survey: Car Color Matters More To Men**

A new survey has revealed that color is more important to men than women when it comes to shopping for a new car. The survey of 695 drivers by fleet management company Fleetcare found 47.4 per cent of men said color was the most important factor to consider when buying a car, compared to 41 per cent of women. Read the full article at:

[http://motortrend.com/features/news/112\\_news66/](http://motortrend.com/features/news/112_news66/)

### **Researchers Address Intersection Safety**

According to the UC Berkeley Institute of Transportation Studies' Partners for Advanced Transit and Highways (PATH) program, roughly 25 percent of all crashes happen at intersections and another 20 percent are "intersection-related." Crashes are twice as likely to occur at intersections where there is a signal compared to those without any signals. Researchers have been working over the last five years to make situations like these safer by developing intelligent warning and detection systems that could aid drivers in these circumstances. For more information visit,

<http://www.its.berkeley.edu/newsbits/intersectionsupport.html>

### **Georgia Unveils New Line Of 'Safety' Gift Cards**

The Georgia Governor's Office of Highway Safety is issuing a new line of gift cards this holiday season with an emphasis on safety. Here's how it works: Citizens are invited to print one out from the web site, sign the back, and pledge to be a designated driver for someone they love. The new initiative ties in with the state's Operation Zero Tolerance, a crackdown on drunk drivers over the holidays.

Operation Zero Tolerance runs through January 2 and during this time period police will be exercising zero tolerance for drunk drivers. Read the full article at

<http://www.wtctv.com/Global/story.asp?S=4255547&nav=0qq6>

### **Parking Meters Get A Not So Nice Upgrade**

Enjoying an overfed parking meter might be a thing of the past for some drivers in California. New high-tech meters have a wire grid beneath each parking space and sense the magnetic disruption caused by a vehicle's departure, causing the meter's time to reset to zero. Read the full article at

[http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/11/magazine/11ideas\\_section3-4.html?ex=1291957200&en=154e2fbe04c6a2b9&ei=5090&partner=%20rssuserland&emc=rss](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/11/magazine/11ideas_section3-4.html?ex=1291957200&en=154e2fbe04c6a2b9&ei=5090&partner=%20rssuserland&emc=rss)

### **New Jersey Seeks To Crack Down On Cell Phone Use**

New Jersey, one of three states with a statewide ban on handheld cell phone use while driving, is one step closer to making their rule a little tougher. A new measure seeks to allow police to pull over drivers solely for violating the ban. Currently, drivers can only be cited for using a handheld phone when they are stopped for another offense, such as speeding. Existing New Jersey law fines drivers between \$100 and \$250 for using their cell phones while driving.

### **Bracelets Promote Traffic Safety Ohio Youth**

High school students across the state of Ohio will begin receiving blue, peach, pink and yellow wristbands imprinted with the phrase "Save Face. Buckle Up!" The idea was developed a year ago to raise awareness about the importance of wearing a seat belt. The state will distribute 50,000 wristbands statewide to people signing a pledge to wear a seat belt. Read the full article at <http://www.limaohio.com/story.php?IDnum=20482>

### **Study Finds High Prevalence Of Alcohol Impaired Driving Behaviors**

Traffic deaths and injuries are among the most frequent causes of deaths and disability worldwide. NHTSA reports that approximately 40 percent of all traffic fatalities are alcohol-related. A new study examined the magnitude of driver-based (i.e., driving while drinking and driving after having too much to drink) and passenger-based (i.e., riding with a drinking driver and riding as a passenger while drinking) drinking and driving behaviors confronting contemporary America. The study found that in 2001-2002, 23.4 million, or 11.3 percent of American adults reported engaging in at least one of the four driver- or passenger-based drinking and driving behaviors.

Source: Drug and Alcohol Dependence Authors: S.P. Chou , D.A Dawson , F.S Stinson, B. Huang. R.P. Pickering, Y. Zhou , B.F. Grant

### **Work-Life:**

#### **Passengers Increase Teen Drivers' Crash Risk**

Teen drivers are involved in more deadly motor vehicle crashes than any other driver on the road, and according to experts, they are far more likely to crash if their friends are riding along with them. A study by IIHS found that driver education programs do little to improve a teen's driving skills and have little impact on their propensity for crashes. Studies show that a 16-year-old is four times as likely to be involved in a fatal crash as a driver who is 21 or older. This figure rises almost exponentially with each additional teen in the vehicle, according to IIHS. Read the full article at <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2005/12/15/MNG7PG8F8S1.DTL>

#### **Survey Finds Older Drivers Concerned About Mobility**

More than four in five Americans age 65 or older worry that they will be stranded and unable to get around when they can no longer drive, according to a survey released by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA). By 2030, more than 70 million people will be 65 years of age or older. For more information visit [http://www.apta.com/media/releases/051206seniors\\_worry.cfm](http://www.apta.com/media/releases/051206seniors_worry.cfm)

#### **For Many Teens, Safety Doesn't Matter**

According to a recent survey, 90 percent of parents said safety was the most important factor when choosing a car for their teen drivers. However, when asked about their children's concerns, 66% responded that "style or coolness" was a major factor for their children. "One of the biggest challenges a family faces when selecting a car for a teen driver is convincing the teen that there are more important considerations than what's cool," says Charley Gillespie, a spokesman for Nationwide Insurance. Read the full article at <http://www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20051215/BUSINESS01/%20512150559/1014>

### **News from the USDOT:**

#### **NHTSA, IIHS Make Choosing A Safe Car Easy**

In the market for a new car? Car buyers should check out the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) and NHTSA for the latest on safety. Both organizations test new cars and post the results on

the Web to give car buyers a good idea about which cars are safer than others. For more information visit, <http://www.suntimes.com/output/auto/cst-nws-crash12.html>

### **Report Examines FMCSA's Consumer, Safety Awareness Programming**

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) released a new report outlining several education and outreach programs designed to promote motor carrier safety and consumer awareness. The results of the study found that more needs to be done to evaluate how these programs affected driver behavior. View the full report at <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d06103.pdf>

### **Record Low Crash Rate For Large Trucks**

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, the fatal crash rate for large trucks fell to its lowest rate in 30 years in 2004. The record low rate comes as more vehicles are on today's roadways, and underscores efforts to reduce crashes involving large trucks.

### **NHTSA Issues New Rule On Tractor Trailer Braking Distance**

NHTSA proposed a new rule that would reduce the stopping distance of truck tractors by 20 to 30 percent. According to the agency, advancements in existing brake technologies will enable brake manufacturers to bring trucks into compliance with the new proposal. Currently, improved drum brakes and air disc brakes are available, but very few fleets are purchasing them. Costs and reluctance to install the brakes on fleets are contributing factors.

### **FHWA Report Examines Progress of Intelligent Vehicle Program**

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) released a new report outlining the progress of the Intelligent Vehicle Initiative (IVI). The report presents the history of IVI and its successes, as well as how this initiative evolved over time. To view the report visit [http://www.itsdocs.fhwa.dot.gov/JPODOCS/REPTS\\_TE/14153.htm](http://www.itsdocs.fhwa.dot.gov/JPODOCS/REPTS_TE/14153.htm)

### **Report: More Americans Wearing Their Seat Belts**

NHTSA released a new report that includes state-by-state seat belt use statistics. According to NHTSA, more Americans than ever are wearing their seat belts, with usage rates climbing in 34 states in 2005. In 2005, seat belt use ranged from 60.8 percent in Mississippi to 95.3 percent in Hawaii. Others breaking the 90 percent belt use barrier included Washington, Nevada, Arizona, Oregon, Michigan, California, Puerto Rico, and Maryland. View the report at <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/pdf/nrd-30/NCSA/RNotes/2005/809970.pdf>

### **International Traffic Safety News:**

#### **Britain To Track, Record Motorists**

Britain will become the first country to track the movements of all vehicles on the roads. The new national surveillance system will use a network of cameras that can automatically read every passing number plate. The plan is to build a huge database of vehicle movements allowing police and security services to analyze any journey a driver has made over several years. For more information visit <http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/transport/article334686.ece>

#### **New Parking Meters Make It Easy To Pay, Tough Not To Pay**

A new line of parking meters to be unveiled in Vancouver is expected to be easier to use—and easier to nab violators. The upgraded parking meters would accept credit and debit cards, even payment by cellular telephones, and provide grace periods for stragglers. However, anyone who fails to pay will need to do more than beat the meter police. The new meters are also designed to capture the images

of licenses plates, ensuring that late charges are paid. Read the full article at  
<http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/world/20051221-0715-can-parkingmeters.html>

### **Company Cars Expected To Make A Comeback In The UK**

Fueled by duty of care concerns, the company car is expected to make a major comeback in the UK over the next few years. According to fleet officials, the government has made it clear that it wants the company car to remain a key part of the corporate landscape, as well as concerns over potential liability.